

Dramatic Plays for Young Peoples' Societies

The Soap Club

BY

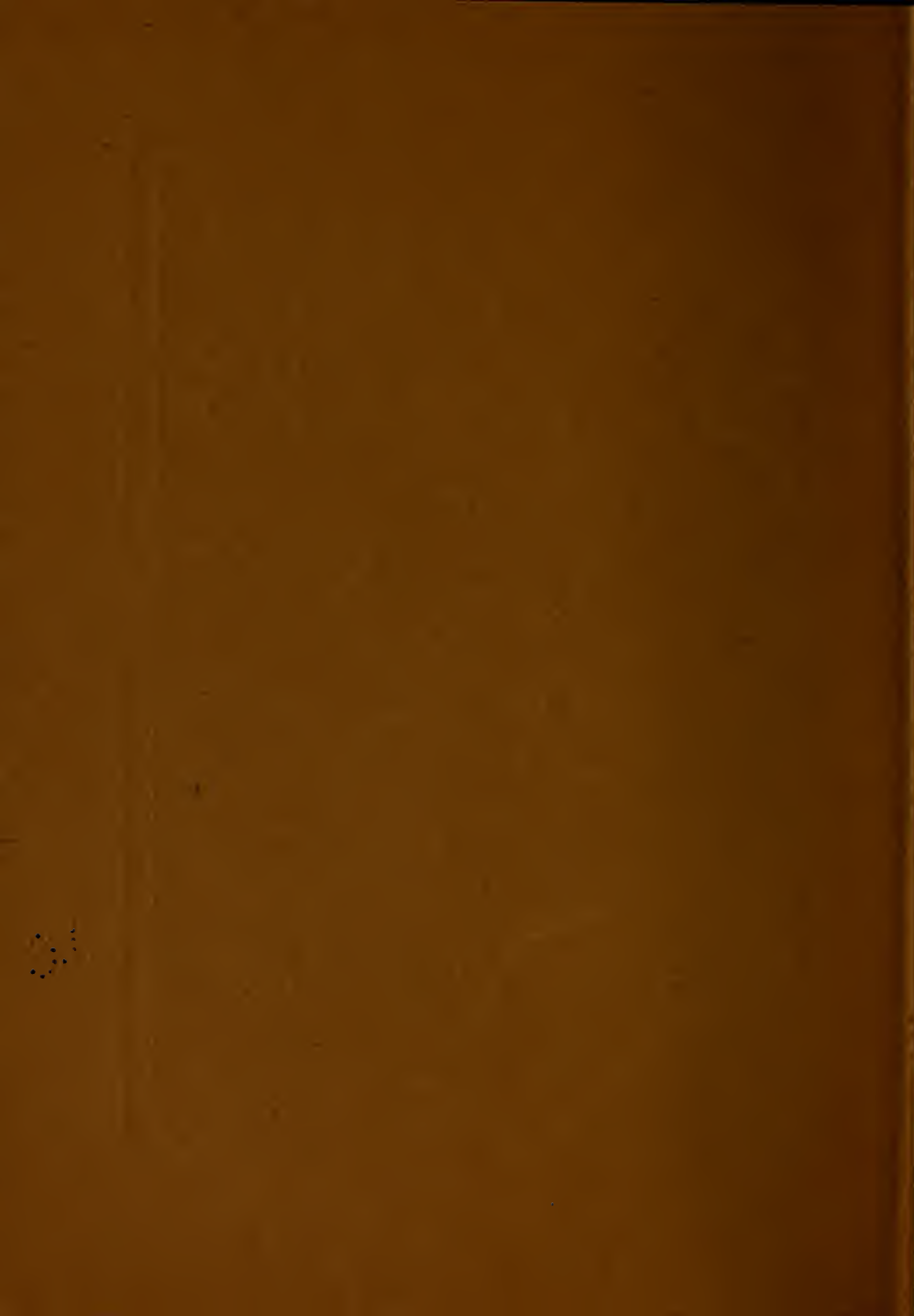
E. J. FREUND.

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Cast of characters:

Mrs. Myers, elderly woman, knitting at a stocking of home-spun wool, talking peevishly.

Mrs. Gooseman	}	rural characters of a homely
Mrs. Becker		looking kind, dressed in cal-
Mrs. Toper		ico, white apron, hair parted
Mrs. Taylor		in the middle and smoothened
Mrs. Harder		downward over ears; sewing or crocheting.

Mrs. Dollar, a farm lady of a somewhat higher education; a string of glass beads around neck; earrings; hair gathered in topknot, with a large topcomb; thread-worn silk dress.— President of Soap Club, hence some dignity.

Mrs. Steele	}	two more rotund than lengthy ladies
Mrs. Long		with bib aprons and side combs.

Tena, the servant of Mrs. Myers; foot-free skirt, wooden slippers, coarse white woolen stockings. Hair donned in two long braids hanging down back. White lace cap.

Scene: large room at Mrs. Myers; old-time wooden chairs, placed around the walls; in center at the front a small table with boquet on.

Curtain rising shows Mrs. Myers seated at extreme right, knitting.

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no. 1.

THE SOAP CLUB.

meat.

Mrs. Myers. There, I lost another mesh! (tries to take it up.) How silly of me. And this on the very day when all the ladies of the Soap Club are due at my house for their monthly meeting! Should this be a bad foreboding... Well, I say! And I can't get the measly thing on again... the needle won't go thru the loop. (calls): Te-na! - Teee-na-a-a!

Tena (behind the scene). Yes-s!

Myers. I lost a mesh and for the life of me can't take it up again. Will you come and help me?

Tena (behind scene.) Yes-s, I'll be there as soon as I put on my slippers.

Myers (to herself.) If she is running about the kitchen on her socks, she certainly is out of humor, that much I know. To think of all the fine ladies coming here and Tena cross-grained, makes me feel nervous. Something is sure to turn out wrong this afternoon. (To Tena who enters.) Look, did you ever see the like of this? See, if you can put it back on the needle. My eyes are dim as tho I'm looking thru cobwebs.

Tena (takes stocking from Mrs. Myers and endeavors to put back mesh.) Dear me, how things like this will happen! Why, your fingers are trembling!

Myers. Shouldn't wonder if they do. I'm not used to such racket as we shall soon have here. And to think of that most stylish Mrs. Dollar... She dresses so exclusively and looks about her with so much dignity, that I feel afraid of her. Wonder how she will like our cookies.

Tena. Cookies? If we only had some! It scared me so when you called me that I dropped a slab of wood on the baking oven and when I peeped in, all our cookies had fallen flat like shingles. I'm sure we can't offer them to Mrs. Doller.

Myers. There! I knew something would happen as soon as I dropped that mesh. What are we to do about it? So many ladies in the house and no cookies!

Tena. Don't fret, Mrs. Myers. I have sent Fred to the grocer to get some of those store cookies. (Hands back stocking.) There, your mesh is on again. What I was going to say — shall I push the big family table in this room and set it here?

Myers. O dear, no, Tena, no, no, not in here. That wouldn't be stylish. In fact it would be ridiculous to dine from that big table. No, my dear girl, our Soap Club dines from the lap. That's the way they did it when they met at Mrs. Gooseman's and Taylor's. From the lap, my dear girl, is all the go. They hold the cup with their left hand and put the cooky on their lap, if they don't choose to hold it with their right hand. That's the only style possible with the Soap Club. Don't give us away, Tena, by setting the table in here.

Tena. And do they take the coffee also from their lap?

Myers. No, they take that from the cup while it stands on the saucer. But don't you fill it up to the rim—only half filled, Tena, and on top of the coffee a spoonful of whipped cream—never and under no conditions any skim milk, Tena! That's what educated people call Simmi Toss. Remember that, and don't you make us ridiculous in their sight.

Tena. And what am I to do with those spoiled cookies?

Myers. Put them aside until some other time, then I'll try them to see whether they are still fit to eat. You've put in them all those expensive eggs, and sugar, and cream, and nutmeg. It would be a sin to throw all that away. We'll eat 'em by the way — I mean when we're between ourselves. (A rap at the door,) Mercy, there goes the first knock at the door. Run and see who it may be. Shouldn't wonder if it's the first one of them.

Tena. Well, now in case it's some of them womens, shall I bring 'em in here?

Myers. Yes, show 'em in here. (Tena exit.) I wonder where else she would want to put them. There's no room in the kitchen, and the dining room is taken up by the big table. No, they must come in here, for this is my best room, and Tena has scrubbed the floor to a nicety . . . Wonder who it is. (stares expectantly towards entrance.)

Mrs. Gooseman and Mrs. Becker (enter.) How-de-do?

Myers. (without rising.) How-de-do. Make yourself at home. Take a seat. There are chairs at the wall. (Both ladies sit.) Well, how is the weather outside?

Mrs. Becker. Tolerably fair so far. But our cat was scratching her left ear when I left this noon; I'm afraid we will have some rough weather before long.

Mrs. Gooseman. Well, I always thought that it was a sign of something else. My mother always said that in a case like that we were to get callers.

Myers. Yes, that's what I always heard.

Becker. You are right if the cat licks herself behind the left ear. But our's didn't lick herself. It was scratching, which she did.

Goose. Maybe that'll turn out differently. I should think

when a cat scratches herself, it would foretell thunder and lightning.

Myers (softening them down.) After all you may be right. who knows! I'm sure that cats know more about the weather than anyone would believe.

Goose. And, then, I think thunder and lightning fits very well together with rain, for when I heard the old she-owl in Henning's swamp hoot last night at twelve o'clock, I thought right away of thunder and lightning. It always rains when she hoots that way.

Myers. To be sure, rain and thunder fit admirably well together. I guess Mrs. Becker's cat is right after all.

Becker. That reminds me — when I gathered in the eggs yesterday, I saw some goose-quills curling wildly in a fence corner, and whenever quills circle like that something is sure to happen.

Goose. For life's sake, do you want to say that there was a spook in that fence corner?

Becker. I don't believe in a spook. Still when you see loose quills monkeying around in a fence corner, it isn't far from raining, so much is certain.

Myers (softening them down.) Shouldn't wonder if something like that will turn up; for rain and thunder belong together. (knocks at the door.) Come in.

Mrs. Loper, Taylor and Harder (enter.) How-de-do.

Mrs. Becker and Gooseman. How-de-do.

Myers. How-de-do. Well, be seated, women, there's plenty chairs in the room.

(Mrs. Loper, Taylor and Harder sit.)

Mrs. Loper. What do you say to that? Mrs. Becker and Gooseman are here already. Well, how are you folks?

Becker. Thank you, I'm well. How are your folks faring?

Mrs. Taylor. We're keeping on the move, that's about all.
Any news?

Goose. We talked about the weather.

Taylor. About the weather, you say? I'm afraid it won't last. When I went into the cattle yard this morning, our geese made a murderous noise, honking and flapping their wings like mad. I've noticed that this is always a sure sign of dry weather.

Becker. We were just talking about feathers, but we made out that they foretell thunder showers.

Taylor. Thunder showers? How so, Mrs. Becker? Look, it is like this way: when you see geese fly and honk, something is in the air, that's sure, you may depend on it. So my mother has always told me, and if anybody knew something about the weather, it was my mother.

Myers (appeasingly.) We're only talking, that's all. It may just as well be a dry spell as rain, you know.

Goose. No, Mrs. Myers, I differ decidedly. When you hear that old she-owl hoot in Henning's swamp. It'll be nothing but a drenching rain.

Myers (calming her down.) So let it be rain, for all I care.

Mrs. Harder. I've got a better sign than that. When I was milking our cows this morning, I saw Redstripes, which is our oldest and wisest cow, blow up her nostrils in a suspicious manner; and when she acts that way, we are certain to have rain.

Goose. There! Didn't I tell you? Now Mrs. Harder says the same thing.

Becker. And as soon as two unite on one thing, it is the very thing which will happen. So let us look out for a big thunder storm.

Loper. Now, I always hate to butt in if some one is talking, but allow me to say something. When I was milking our red cow this morning she put a loop in her tail, and if she rings her tail early in the morning, we always have a fair day.

Taylor. Really, this is getting more interesting at every second. One cow foretells rain by blowing up her nostrils and the other fair weather by turning a loop in her tail. Now I'm anxious to see what kind of weather we'll have.

Loper. And you'll see that it'll be fair, for our red cow never makes a mistake.

Myers (soothingly.) Why shouldn't we have a fair day? I think that's what we'll get. For cows know more about the weather than one would imagine.

Goose. Then, I suppose, cows must feel a certain kind of tickling in their tail when the weather changes; otherwise I can't see how they make it out.

Becker. Why can't it be that their nose itches when the weather changes? You know it's the same way with women-folks who say that their nose always itches when they are going to hear interesting news. Who can tell!

Loper. Maybe you are right, Mrs. Becker, but I am positive that a loop in the tail foretells fair weather.

Myers (soothingly.) Why shouldn't it? Some cows are very wise and experienced.

Becker. But the majority of us have foretold rain, Mrs. Myers, listen (keeping count by touching her fingers): our cat has been scratching her left ear; the old she-owl in Henning's swamp has been hooting the dear life out'n herself; our goose quills have been flying around in the fence corner; and Mrs. Harder's red-striped cow has been blowing up her nostrils. All these are signs for

rain and thunder storms. Still I can add another one:—since this morning my corns have been hurting me, and that's a sign of bad weather, you may believe me or not.

Myers. (soothingly.) So we shall have rain, I believe.

Taylor. And I say, if our geese honk and flap their wings, we will most certainly have a dry spell, and there's no use of talking any longer.

Loper. And there you are right, Mrs. Taylor, for there is surely a good reason for it, when our red cow loops her tail.

Myers. (appeasingly.) And why not, I would like to know? Cows and geese are almost rational beings. (knock at the door.) Come in. (when this invitation does not meet with instantaneous result.) Come in, I say!

Mrs. Dollar. (enters with dignified behavior, talks slowly and very emphatic.) How are you, every one of you ladies?

All. How-de-do, Mrs. Dollar?

Myers. Now, Mrs. Dollar, have a seat, too; as you see all the others are sitting.

Mrs. Dollar. How good of you, Mrs. Myers. I'll take the liberty to sit down (sits). I behold most of our members present.

Goose. Yes, we're at it quite lively, talking about the weather. Now give us your opinion: Will it rain or shine?

Dollar. How can I tell! But when I left home, I saw our gray mule shaking its ears. As a rule that is a sign of wind.

Becker. Another vote for rain! Now I dare the dry prophets to foretell a dry spell.

- Taylor. Wind is no rain, I should say. When the geese flap their wings, it means dry weather,
- Loper. And after all you'll see that our red cow is right. Last night when we sat around the table reading, our lamp flickered. Then my man said, The lamp flickers we will have a change in the weather.
- Goose. I always thought that in a case like that the wick needs cleaning.
- Dollar. Or it may have its cause in the kerosene; as soon as the kerosene hasn't got sufficient ocean in it, the flame flickers.
- Becker. Dear me! I always thought that the ocean served to carry ships; and now you say it is burning in the lamp
- Dollar. (smiling sweetly.) In order to understand scientific principles one has to have education. If a substance is to burn it has to contain carbuncle and ocean.
- Goose. I believe you, Mrs. Dollar. My husband said the other day, it had to contain stink stuff and vinegar, otherwise it will not burn.
- Dollar. (very dignified.) Stink stuff - - yes, but vinegar? I guess you wanted to say acid.
- Goose. Maybe that's the same stuff, I didn't pay very close attention to his words. But he didn't say ocean; it was very much like ozon.
- Dollar. You see that's the same stuff I meant, for carbuncle acid or ocean is something in the air that causes us to breathe ocean and also fire to burn.
- Lopet. Mercy! that's more than I can understand.
- Dollar. One doesn't have to understand it, for it is science. It is the same thing that's in the weather. When the sparrows gather at your window with lively chirping,

there's electric in the air and we'll have rain the very same day. But nobody knows how the sparrows know it.

Goose. There you got it! Didn't I say right at the start that it sounds spooky? And now we have the proof.

Myers (soothingly.) Well, why can't it be that way, Mrs. Gooseman? How do we know?

Dollar. But excuse me, Mrs. Gooseman, a spook is something entirely different; it isn't science.

Goose. It is all the same to me. But if the old she-owl in Henning's swamp hoots like mad, we'll have rain. That isn't a bit spooky. (knock at the door.)

Mrs. Myers. Come in! Come in!

Mrs. Steele and Mrs. Long(enter) How-de-do.

All. How-de-do. (Mrs. Dollar loudly and sharply): How do you do?

Myers. Well, sit down in the row, there are two vacant chairs left. (newcomers sit.)

Dollar (scrutinizing the new-comers.) Now our Soap Club is complete, I guess. We will now talk about soap.

Steele. As far as I'm considered, it's a go, for Mrs. Klipper can't come.

Dollar. Why not?

Steele. Nothing special, only she sent her kitchen girl away and must do her work herself.

Goose. What made her send the girl away?

Steele. On 'count of some kind of business, I heard. There was no real reason for it, only that the girl insulted Mrs. Klipper.

Myers. A good girl will never insult her mistress, for it isn't nice.

Becker. How did it happen?

Steele. Well, you see, she sent the girl to the druggist to get some insect powder for the cabbage worms, and the girl always brought home such a big package for five cents. Mrs. Klipper felt astonished at this, for when she got insect powder, the druggist would give her not half as much. She up and inquires, how so and why. Well, the girl says, I always tell him it is for Mrs. Klipper; then he'll give me a big pile and say wonderingly, Must she have a lot of vermin! That, you see, made Mrs. Klipper mad and she told the girl to leave.

Myers. I'm sure a decent girl wouldn't have said such a thing, for people can make a whole lot of it.

Dollar. Now we ought to be ready to take up soap talk.

Loper (to Harder.) Mrs. Harder, I heard you have been away lately.

Harder. 'Tis so. I went on a visit to my sister's daughter's child, where I had to ride on the train for many miles; after that I had to take to a ship and ride on a big piece of water. They told me it was half as big as the biggest ocean.

Taylor. What was the name of it.

Harder. That I didn't catch; it sounded very much like keekerkee.

Loper. I never heard of such an ocean.

Harder. That's very likely. But I'm sure that there is such a big water, for I sailed on it. And they had a terrible mean mate on the ship. When I asked him the name of the big water, he told me to crow like a young bantam rooster, keekereekee, and I wouldn't forget it. And he was right in spite of his meanness.

Dollar (pensively.) Like a crowing bantam rooster? Keekereekee? Was it lake Erie?

Harder. So it was! I remember quite well that there was a lake before it. But I thought it to be the ocean and enquired of the rude-mannered mate whether this was the Pacific ocean. He said this wasn't no ocean, at all not the Pacific because it was too loud here; the word pacific meaning quiet water. 'Why is it too loud here?' I asked. 'Because there is too many inquisitive wimmin here,' he says. There! imagine his rudeness!

Myers. Indeed, that was very rude.

Mrs. Long. While you talk about traveling — that reminds me. When I went to the big city called Minnepoppel, the train went so very slow that it seemed to me as tho we did hardly move. According to the timetable we were due there at four p. m., and now it was past five already. So I asked the conductor why they didn't make better time, and he said, We don't travel by hours, we travel by date only. Imagine a conductor talking like that!

Dollar (restlessly.) I'm sure that's very educating, but ladies, how about our soap? Why not talk about soap? Myers (soothingly.) Soap is very good and a nice thing to have; everybody is using it.

Becker. O, Mrs. Myers, while I think about it — what is the old gent who is rooming with you, doing for a living? What is his business?

Myers. His business at present is, as far as I am able to tell, to merely room here. At least that is all he does.

Long. I hope he doesn't overwork himself in doing that. He must be a man like mine. When mine sees that I've been splitting half a cord of stove wood, he sits down in the rocker and weeps half a day long because I have to work so hard.

Steele. Well, he certainly thinks something of his wife.

To tell the truth, neither have I any reason to complain.

My man is very good. You wouldn't believe his fondness for music. He is practicing on the piyanner all day long and never gets tired of music. But the pity of it is his fingers are so very clumsy that he always strikes two keys at a time with one finger. He can't even finish a simple melody.

Goose (laughingly.) What a funny player! So he really plays two parts with one finger. He reminds me of the baker in(name some near town) who had such little eyes that he always got the size of his buns too small. There was no other way for him but to buy a magnifying glass in order to make them of the right size.

Dollar (impatiently). But, ladies, we are forgetting the soap. Every one of us must do some washing.

Loper. Washing! Ain't we washing right along? While we're rasping the men-folks, I must tell you a story of my man. He likes to go rabbit hunting, but never gets anything. So he takes our boys along to drive the rabbits up to his stand. Recently he shot three times at a big rabbit father without hitting him. His usual luck. Then he overheard Henry calling to Fred, If pa doesn't stop his bum shooting we won't get a single rabbit to-day.

Dollar. I don't see how they are to get rabbits without shooting them.

Loper. Well, you see, if my man stops shooting at them, the boys aren't afraid any more, they catch the rabbits and kill them with a club.

Harder. Mrs. Gooseman, you were talking about playing

the piano. The other day I heard your man play a beautiful tune. Can you tell me what it was?

Goose. I presume it must have been 'The Last Rose' for he's always pounding that tune.

Loper. Well, isn't 'The Last Rose' a nice piece?

Goose. Don't know. I prefer 'spargrass with cream every time.

Dollar (very loud and dignified.) Ladies! It's getting high time to begin with the soap. Who is wanting some soap to-day?

Taylor (to Steele, loud.) Did you get your telephone in the house?

Steele. We did. But excuse me, I heard your Gussie went to college. Is that so?

Taylor. Yes, she went. But I'm afraid she won't stand it very long.

Steele. What makes you think so?

Taylor. They're overburdening her with study. Just think of it, she has to take six periodicals daily. I'm sure no girl can stand that.

Steele. Periodical? Is that what one calls a newspaper?

Taylor. I think so. But, my lands! I don't want Gussie to become a newspaper girl. I wonder why she has to read so many papers.

Dollar. Are you sure she wrote 'periodicals?' When I went to college we had to take six periods a day, periods meaning lesson-hours.

Taylor. O, lessons, you say? Maybe she meant lessons by that horrible word. Why can't they teach their scholars decent language at college, I should like to know!

Steele. How does your Gussie like the college life?

Taylor. She is much pleased with it. But it seems to me they are doing uncanny things over there. She writes that they don't write with pen and ink as we had to do at school; they write by tipping a keyboard like there is on our parlor organ.

Steele. I don't see how they can write by tipping on a keyboard.

Dollar. It seems to me she must have a typewriter that she is learning to write with. That's a certain kind of machine made for the purpose of writing letters and the like.

Steele. For land's sake, what is this old world coming to? I just hate to look at machines. They are now doing their laundry with machines, I'm told, and some one was telling me that farmers are hatching young chicks with machines. Did you ever hear of such nonsense?

Myers.(interestedly.) Do you mean the ouch-mobiles? You are perfectly correct. They almost scare the life out'n me everytime I have to cross the street. Dear me! Now-a-days a child has to be born with eyes in front and on the back. Looking back on the streets almost strains one's neck. Don't mention ouch-mobiles to me.

Goose. That's what I say! And what's still worse is the airships. I would like to know, how soon they'll fly above our town. I'm so awfully afraid one of them buzzing machines will fall right on to my head when I'm outdoors.

Steele. Something like that is liable to happen any day, I'm sure. My Gussie wrote me in her last letter that at college she has to learn about the meannesses of the olden times. Imagine that! Teaching our girls all the

meannesses of other peoples! Why can't they teach them something good instead? If Gussie losses her mind and comes home a lunatic, it is the fault of her professors. And at home she won't even know how to bake Johnny cake. What a shame!

Dollar. Ladies; I must remind you that we have met here as the Soap Club. When will we begin to talk about soap? I think we are losing time.

Myers(soothingly.) Wouldn't it be better to wait a little yet? That reminds me (calls) Te-na! Tena! Come here, (To her guests.) We'll have a little bite before we talk about soap.

Tena (enters.) What is it you want, Mrs. Myers?

Myers. Now it's time, Tena — bring in the lunch, a cup of coffee for each one and cookies on a tray.

Tena. Cookies? Didn't I tell you that our cookies fell flat in the tin when I dropped the slab of firewood?

Myers(greatly embarrassed.) Oh — Oh - - that - - Wait, I'll go along and help you (exit with Tena.)

All (laughing loudly as soon as door closes. The next dialog following in quick succession.)

Goose. Well, I say!

Becker. That silly goose of a girl!

Loper. That's what you get when you want to show off.

Taylor. I say, leave everything to the kitchen girl!

Harder. Shouldn't wonder if her Tena learned how to bake cookies at college.

Steele. I'll bet it'll be a swell lunch!

Long. Easy! She is coming.

Dollar. Now, ladies, put on a sober face, everybody.

Myers and Tena (enter. Myers holds tray with 'store' cookies and offers to every lady with appropriate re-

mark. Tena carries large tray with eight cups and saucers of which she serves one to every one.)

Goose (takes a cup with saucer.) My, but that coffee smells fine!

Becker (takes. To Loper): How is your sick neighbor getting along. Has he got sleep? appetite?

Loper. He sleeps but he isn't appetizing.

Taylor (takes. To Harder): Are you drinking your coffee black?

Harder (takes.) No, only the first three cups, for the rest I take cream.

Dollar (takes. To others.) The first thing we must do after this is to talk about soap.

Steele (takes. To Long): Your Fred always was a nice looking boy.

Long (takes.) That's of no use anymore; day before yesterday he got engaged to Lily Liber.

Myers (takes and sits down on her chair.) Now you all must eat and drink as much as you like. If anyone wishes for more coffee, just say so.

Tena. Then I'll have to put water in the kettle right away, for the first batch is gone.

Myers (reprovingly.) Oh, Tena!

All (while hiding merriment.) Never mind, Tena, I don't wish for more, I've got a great plenty. [Tena exit.]

Dollar (trying to cover embarrassment.) Has any one of you heard that our minister has declined to bury old man Horner?

All. No! When did he die?

Goose. That strikes me like lightning from a sunny sky.

Becker. I say! The old man, gone, eh? Only yesterday I had a chat with him. He must have died quite sud-

den.

Loper. So they got rid of him at last. He's been old and bothersome for quite a time.

Harder. I wonder why our minister refuses to bury him.

Taylor. Something must have happened to anger the minister; otherwise he wouldn't refuse his burial.

Dollar (rising and putting cup and saucer on table.) Now I must go home. I had a dish of dough standing on the hot water box when I left. It must have raised by this time. So I'm going home to put it into the baking tins.

Steele (astonished.) I thought we were going to talk about soap now!

Dollar. Didn't I remind you of soap ever so often, but none of you would listen. Now my time is up, I must hurry.

Steele. You surely have got a couple minutes time yet. Stay for just a little while longer.

Dollar. No, I haven't got a minute time. I fear my dough is wandering up and down the kitchen floor.

Long. But I made up my mind to talk about getting some soap.

Dollar. Haven't got time. Next time you talk about soap when I remind you of it. Good-by (exit.)

Taylor. See her sailing off! I didn't think she was in such a hurry.

Steele. Let her rip. We'll order soap ourselves.

Harder. She's balky because we wouldn't listen.

Loper. Well, I think one is entitled to a word or two without asking her permission.

Becker. Stylish people like her are easily insulted. We must have soap by all means.

Goose. Naturally so. Who of you knows the address of the soap Company?

Steele. I don't know it. Listen, women, who knows? All. I don't.

Myers. None of you? Lands a mass! That means that we are cheated out'n soap. This is what I call getting fooled.

Goose. I'm going to get some Soap from the store.

Becker. But that's so expensive. Only twenty bars for a dollar. Mrs. Dollar always gives us twenty two.

Myers. Oh, I see you are thru with your coffee. I'll take the dishes into the kitchen (rises and begins.)

Long. No, Mrs. Myers, don't trouble about the dishes. Call Tena.

Myers. No, dear, no! She'll only talk foolish stuff about us. Give me your cup, please (gathers in dishes and exit.)

Goose. Did you believe Mrs. Dollar to be as mean as that? It looks as tho she's loony.

Becker. Everything goes wrong to-day. In the first place the cookies fell flat; then the first batch of coffee was gone; then Mrs. Dollar felt insulted. Three wrongs committed in one afternoon.

Steele. Let her go, if she doesn't care to stay. I'm going over to my neighbor and borrow soap from her until we order again... But what takes my breath away is our minister. What makes him balk at burying old man Horner, I should like to know.

Loper. And he was such a good man. Almost every time he attended service he would drop a penny into the contribution box. That's a fact, too. There are many people going to church who don't do that. And yet our minister refuses him a funeral. I think he ought

to be ashamed of himself.

Becker. Does anybody know what happened between them? (all sit still as if thinking.)

Myers (enters.) The way it looks we'll have some rain yet.

Becker. There! What did I tell you? Our cat never scratches her left ear without something to follow.

Goose. And the old she-owl in Henning's swamp.....

Harder (interruptingly.) For land's sake don't start to talk about the weather again... Then none of you knows why the minister declines to bury old man Horner?

Taylor. Maybe it didn't suit him just right. You all know the minister is getting old, and old people are cranky.

Becker. Cranky? He is more than cranky, he is cross-grained. If some one says things he doesn't like he is sure to deny him a funeral.

Steele. But a still bigger hot-head was old man Horner; and the biggest cranky-head of them all is our president Mrs. Dollar. She likes to play off the stylish lady, and hikes it as soon as she's made our head lousy. Let me alone with stylish ladies, I say!

Long. Well, does she know why the minister refuses the funeral?

Steele. Why shouldn't she? Didn't she tell us about it?

Goose. And I think if she knows one thing she most probably knows the other. What made her run away so soon? She did that to vex us!

Becker. I believe you're right, she is the most treacherous and tricky woman I know.

Myers. Oh dear, people, don't make such a fuss about it. I'll send Tena after her to enquire about it, and then we'll know.

Goose. Yes, Mrs. Myers, do that; I'm sure she can't be far yet.

Myers. Good, I'll tell Tena to hurry (exit.)

Long. This way we'll find out before we leave.

Loper. And mark you what I say: you'll see it's the fault of the minister.

Steele. Who knows, Mrs. Loper! Old man Horner always acted very pious and innocent, but who is to trust the sanctimonious people!

Goose. Sure! under no circumstances. Especially not the men-folks. I think the minister knows more about old Horner than we do.

Steele. Yes, he is very shrewd and sharp.

Long. And I say, every man's got a spot on his life which he tries to cover up. Most likely old man Horner had more than one such spots.

Goose. Why not? They say when his wife died so suddenly, he let her lie three days without calling in the minister.

Taylor. And very likely now the minister wants to punish him for that. See?

Myers (enters.) Dear me, what a rain storm outside!

All (rising, excitedly.) Rain, you say?

Myers. As if one is pouring out barrels of water! Who would have believed this?

Becker. I thought so right away, for our quills never fly in the fence corner without bringing rain.

Taylor. And our geese never flap their wings for nothing Harder. And our red-striped cow never blows her nostrils unless something happens.

Myers (soothingly.) Yes - yes - I say, those beasts often know more than we do.

Harder. But now! Now we'll get wet to the skin going

home.

Becker. And none of us has thought of taking an umbrella along. Well, this is a nice fix we're in.

Goose. Mrs. Dollar has been the wiser woman of us all, for she had sense enough to go home while the weather was yet good. Now our whole Soap Club will get wet.

Becker. And as soon as soap gets wet it grows slippery. A nice predicament, I say!

Loper. Yes, people; but what's the use of feeling sore about it?

Myers. Maybe if you all wait a while yet, it'll stop raining.

Taylor. Not if my geese flap their wings the way they did. As a rule it'll rain for three days without stopping in a case like this.

All (screaming.) Dear me!—Lands! for life's sake!—Three days!...

Goose. Where's my things, my cape and shawl? I'm going home.

All (in great mix-up.) So am I — Mrs. Myers, where's my shawl? my hat? — Listen, how it pours! — It sounds just like a cloud-burst.

Myers. Wait a little yet, will ye, women? Tena'll be back in a moment and then you'll find out why the minister refused a funeral to old Horner.

Goose. What's the use, Mrs. Myers, if we all get soaked?

Becker. We'll get soaked anyhow. So why not wait as well?

Harder. To say the truth, I would really like to know why old Horner has to stay unburied.

Tena (enters with skirt over her head.)

Myers. There's Tena! Well, Tena, did you catch Mrs. Dollar?

Tena (shaking herself as tho shaking off rain.) Yes, I caught up with her at the gate.

Myers. And what did Mrs. Dollar say? Why does the minister refuse to bury old man Horner?

Tena (very loud and distinctly.) Because he isn't dead yet. All (start a great buzzing and bustle, some screaming, some laughing very loud and prolonged, others scolding.): Such baseness!—Oh this cruel Mrs. Dollar!—Fooling the whole Soap Club!—And that's what you call a president!—And after all no soap!—But soaking wet like geese! (Curtain.)



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